

Table 1: Status of Snake fauna in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan

SN	Common name	Scientific name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Brahminy Blind Snake	<i>Ramphotyphlops braminus</i>		+							+				
2.	Rough-tailed Sand Boa	<i>Gonylophis conicus</i>									+		+		
3.	Indian Sand Boa	<i>Eryx johnii</i>		+				*			+				
4.	Trinket Snake	<i>Coelognathus helena</i>													+
5.	Oriental Rat Snake	<i>Ptyas mucosa</i>									+		+		
6.	Hardwicke's Rat Snake	<i>Platyceps ventromaculatus</i>		+				+			+				
7.	Diadem Snake	<i>Spalerosophis diadema</i>									+	+			
8.	Royal Snake	<i>Spalerosophis atriceps</i>										+			
9.	Red-spotted Royal Snake	<i>Spalerosophis arenarius</i>		+							+				
10.	Sind Longnose Sand Snake	<i>Lytorhynchus paradoxus</i>													+
11.	Indian Wolf Snake	<i>Lycodon aulicus</i>									+				
12.	Asiatic Water Snake	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>									+		+		+
13.	Lead Keelback	<i>Macropisthodon plumbicolor</i>													+
14.	Indian Gamma Snake	<i>Boiga trigonata</i>									+				
15.	Schokari Sand Racer	<i>Psammophis schokari</i>		+							+				
16.	Green Whip Snake	<i>Ahaetulla nasuta</i>													+
17.	Indian Krait	<i>Bungarus caeruleus</i>		+				+			+				
18.	Indian Cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>						+			+				
19.	Russell's Viper	<i>Daboia russelii</i>									+				
20.	Saw-scaled Viper	<i>Echis carinatus</i>		+					*		+	+	+		+

1 - Barmer; 2 - Bikaner; 3 - Churu; 4 - Ganganagar; 5 - Hanumangarh; 6 - Jaisalmer; 7 - Jalore; 8 - Jhunjhunu; 9 - Jodhpur; 10 - Nagaur; 11 - Pali; 12 - Sikar; 13 - Sirohi; '+' - Earlier record; '*' - Present record

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11. HARDWICK'S SPINY-TAILED LIZARD (*UROMASTYX HARDWICKII*, GRAY 1827) PREYED ON BY INDIAN SAND BOA (*ERYX JOHNII*, RUSSELL 1801)

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The Narayan Sarowar Sanctuary (NSS) is located (23° 27'-23° 42' N; 68° 30'-68° 57' E) in the westernmost part of the Kachchh district of the Gujarat State, India. NSS is a unique arid thorn forest ecosystem of the country which supports 15 threatened species of wildlife belonging to Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Singh 2001). In which, a lizard *Uromastyx hardwickii* is found locally common (Vyas 2002) and is also categorized as Vulnerable (Molur and Walker 1998).

A recent observation of *Eryx johnii* preying on *U. hardwickii* was observed at NSS on September 10, 2008, at 0940 hrs in the reserve forest (Grassland) of Bhojpur village



Fig. 1: *Eryx johnii* holding *Uromastyx hardwickii* in its mouth

(Abdasa taluka). We sighted *Eryx johnii* with a *U. hardwickii* in its mouth (Fig. 1). In the beginning, I was unable to identify the lizard as only the head of the lizard was caught by the snake, and the rest of the body was inside the burrow. However, it was easily identified when the Sand Boa (*E. johnii*) threw out the entire body of the lizard. This act

tired the *E. johnii* and it rested for 40-55 seconds. It then threw out the entire body, and ate the lizard in 12 minutes and moved off slowly under the bushes of *Prosopis juliflora*.

Since *E. johnii* and *U. hardwickii* are common species in the sanctuary, both species (prey and predator) were easily identified by sight.

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12. DISCUSSION ON THE SNAKE FAUNA OF GUJARAT STATE, WITH SOME NOTABLE RECORDS

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A literature survey indicates that the snake fauna of Gujarat State consists of 63 species and subspecies belonging to 41 genera and 8 families (Appendix 1) (Vyas 2000, 2006), indicating a diversified fauna. This richness and diversity of the snake fauna of the state is due to the diversity of habitat types in the state, from desert to moist deciduous forests, mudflats to mangrove forests and natural fresh water wetlands to saline gulfs. Gujarat is the place where all major hill complexes (from north to south: Aravali, Vindhya, Satpuda and Sahyadri) meet within relatively short distances. Such hill complexes and various types of habitat and microhabitats offer suitable habitat conditions for many living organisms, including snake species.

SNAKES OF INDIA – THE FIELD GUIDE by Whitaker and Captain (2004) covers a large number of species inhabiting India, and provides high quality illustrations, descriptions, and natural history with updated information of distribution of 157 snake species. In the book, the authors have not incorporated information on distribution of a few species of snakes, which have been recorded from Gujarat State, or have questioned the records of others.

In this paper, I enumerate records that are not incorporated in that publication or are incorporated as of doubtful occurrence in inhabiting the state.

1. *Grypotyphlops acutus* (Duméril & Bibron, 1844)

The published records of the species indicate that it is widely distributed in the state from Dangs (Daniel and Shull 1963), Navsari district (Navtad, Vansda National Park; Vyas 2004) in south Gujarat; Surendranagar district (Dhangadhra; Sharma 1982); Bhavnagar district (Bhavnagar) and Porbander district (Barda Wildlife Sanctuary) of Saurashtra (Vyas *et al.*

2000): Anand (Vallabh Vidhyanagar) and Ahmedabad (Gayen 1999: ZSI Reg. no 16.6.1920) of central Gujarat.

However, Whitaker and Captain (2004) show the distribution of the species as "south of the Ganges Basin and south of Rajasthan. Range extends west to Baroda and east to Calcutta". Emendation required in noting its distribution in entire Gujarat (except Kachchh).

2. *Uropeltis ellioti* (Gray, 1858)

The distribution of this species is restricted to the high hills of southern Dangs, south Gujarat. During the monsoons of 1987, I collected a number of specimens of the species at Sunset point of Saputara (20° 33' 58" N; 73° 44' 39" E) and Piplai Devi (Dangs) (Vyas 1988).

According to Whitaker and Captain (2004), this species is distributed in the Western Ghats, mostly to the south of Goa Gap, to Tirunelveli, with scattered records from Bengaluru, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and recently, from Madhya Pradesh (Panchmarhi), and also the Eastern Ghats up to Ganjam on the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border. Here, an addition of Dangs, Gujarat State, is needed.

3. *Uropeltis macrolepis* (Peters, 1862)

I have been able to collect a 26.6 cm specimen of *U. macrolepis* along with *U. ellioti* from Sunset point of Saputara (20° 33' 58" N; 73° 44' 39" E), Dangs (Vyas and Jala 1988). This species was mentioned by Whitaker and Captain (2004), with the comment that 'the Dangs, Gujarat is probably the northern-most limit of its distribution'.

4. *Coelognathus helena monticollaris* (Schulz, 1992)

This subspecies is commonly found in the districts (Dangs, Surat, Nasari and Valsad) of south Gujarat (extreme